THE GLASS IN THE HYDE PARK BUILDING.

SIR,—The day is not far distant when the construction of, and the material employed in, the Hyde Park Building will become fair subject of criticism. The Building Committee acted prematurely in so readily abandoning their own opinions. In the original design great care was taken in deciding on the material to be employed: in the first instance, glass for the roof was specified, 24 oz. to the foot: this, after due deliberation, not being deemed strong enough for ordinary contingencies, was increased to 30 oz. to the foot, the most competent judges being of opinion that thinner glass would not be safe.

In adopting Mr. Paxton's design, one would imagine the building committee considered that they were relieved from further responsibility, as the glass now specified for the structure is of the cheapest and commonest description, viz., *sheet glass 16 ounces to the foot, or one-sixteenth of an inch thick*—an article quite unfit for any *roof*, especially in sizes 49 inches by 10 inches, such as are employed.

There is not a similar instance of cheap glazing in any third-class building to be found: the first respectable hail storm would demolish the whole, if not protected by the canvas outside, but which could not be permanently retained.

The total cost of the glass will be only 10,000*l*. Surely out of 150,000*l*. to be paid for the building, if it remain, something better could have been offered in the glass way.

CAMDEN.

HOPE FOR THE POOR INVENTORS.

THE promise made on the part of the Industrial Commissioners, and supported by the House of Lords, but foiled by the people's own House, the House of Commons, will not, it would seem, be allowed to fall into the dirt, and we rejoice to think so. Every one is aware of the good understanding which subsists between the Society of Arts and the Industrial Commission. We do not pretend to have any official authority for saying so, but we doubt not the public will see, in the announcement now to be made, that the promise of the Commission is about to be supported at least, if not fulfilled, by a committee of noblemen and gentlemen, members of the Society of Arts, who have consented to act in the promotion of a "legislative recognition of the rights of inventors by means of an easy registration of them in accordance with the principles agreed on by the council of the society in 1849."

These principles are—

1. That inventors, designers, &c., ought not to be subjected to any other expenses than such as may be absolutely necessary to secure to them the protection of their inventions.

2. That the difficulties and anomalies experienced in connection with patents should be removed.

3. That the present term of copyright in design for articles of manufacture, and the protection afforded to the authors* and proprietors of inventions, and of designs in arts and manufactures, are inadequate.

4. That for carrying out these objects, the co-operation of all persons interested therein be invited.

The points on which the committee wish particularly to obtain information are, first, the effect which the existing system of patents may have had in suppressing, and thus depriving the public of the knowledge and use of, the inventions of those who are unable to bear the heavy expenses required under it; and, secondly, instances where the expenses have been fruitlessly incurred. The committee request that any facts in any way bearing upon these points may be forwarded to them.

The members of this commission have undertaken a very onerous task, that will require great discretion and discernment to prevent the remedy from being worse than the disease. The evils of the present system are very great, and urgently demand a remedy, but to cope with the cunning of fishing caveats and all the other plundering tricks and practices of patent-harriers and pirates will require no little skill and clear-steering while opening a fair way to poor inventors. The harassing annoyance and deadly effect of law proceedings in the hands of pirates flush of cash, with the legal pistol ready to blow out the brains of poor inventors, must not be overlooked: a cheap tribunal, in which mere money would not constitute power and right, is a great desideratum in patent law reform. And still, restringent measures for the suppression of a host of peddling and contemptible "improvements" and "inventions" that would otherwise shackle and entangle every trifle in the meshes of a cheap patent law, and thus obstruct, in place of promoting, inventive progress, are to be strongly recommended. In short, all the sagacity of this enlightened committee will be requisite to the proper fulfilment of the task which they have undertaken.

Among its members are the Marquis of Northampton, Lord Radnor, Sir J. P. Boileau, Sir J. J. Guest, M.P., Mr. Milner Gibson, M.P., Mr. H. T. Hope, M.P., Mr. S. M. Peto, M.P., Mr. H. Cole, Mr. Charles Dickens, and upwards of twenty other able or influential men.

A "Patent Law Reform Association" has also been formed, by members of the South London Committee for the International Exhibition, and which, we hope, will come to a good understanding with the committee of members of the Society of Arts for the efficient promotion of their one common object.

* Why should authors of inventions and designs be less cheaply or freely protected than authors of books?

RAILWAY JOTTINGS.

A LINE of three-and-a-half miles, at a cost of 50,000*l*. is proposed from Brentford to Wormwood Scrubbs, to unite the South-Western, Great Western, and North-Western. ——The Great Northern are about to consider the expediency of extending their line by an independent route into York, instead of running over the York and North Midland—— The Midland are conveying passengers between Rotherham and Sheffield at the rate of one farthing a mile. The cheap fares on the Tynemouth branch of the York, Newcastle, and Berwick line have very largely increased the number of passengers, and the receipts are now greater than under the old system. The charges are—first class, one penny a mile; second class, one half-penny. We are glad to find that the companies are becoming inclined to give a fair trial to a change of system which we have long recommended, and more so that they are profiting by it.——It appears that the portion of the West Cornwall line from Penzance to Hayle, estimated to cost 70,000*l*., can be executed for 40,000*l*. The contract for the entire completion of the line from Hayle to Penzance Pier has been taken at 29,100*l*.—— Kilkenny is now connected by rail with Dublin. The works connecting the South-Eastern Extension with the Waterford and Kilkenny line at Lavistown have been executed by Messrs. Meehan and Mulquany as sub-contractors. ——The Sydney papers contain an account of the commencement of the first Australian railway. It is to extend from Sydney into the interior.——The contract for the construction of the Calcutta experimental line has been taken by Messrs. Elmslie and Co. of London, whose tender was the lowest. The tenders for the Bombay and Tanna line (about twenty miles in length), were lately sent in.

A SCULPTOR'S VIEW OF THE ARCHITECT.

IN the course of a very interesting lecture on the application of high art to sculpture, delivered last week in Edinburgh by Mr. Patric Park, the lecturer observed, that great injury to art had ever been done in this country by an appeal to precedent; but he trusted that the good sense of the country would gradually emancipate itself from that desperate tyranny, and that they would believe the truth that their natural perceptions were quite as good now as those of their ancestors or of foreign nations, and that they would resolve to think for themselves, instead of mistrusting their own judgment. In architecture this appeal to precedent had done infinite harm—not, however, that judicious appeal which aimed at acquiring knowledge, but that which justified error because it had been consecrated by time. He rejoiced at the improvement apparent in church building. Architecture, however, must give up its absurd claim to regulate the character of statues in certain interiors. The architect may make the walls and the floor, and he may decorate and paint them; he may make the pedestal, when the sculptor's judgment has pronounced the proper height; but he shall not step out of his proper sphere, and control the sculptor's intellect. The study of nature, like a landscape painter, is no less the duty of him who would be a great architect, than is the study of nature and the other branches of the fine arts, if he means to become anything better than a bricklayer, and the application of this high test is no less important to the public in architecture than it is in sculpture and in painting. The great architect is a great power which we cannot contemplate without profound respect. Approaching to even a controlling mind, providing for and anticipating the lowest physical wants and the highest intellectual requirements; regulating decoration with the eye of a painter. Providing light to meet every possible necessity; to harmonise action with thought, so that his walls, his roofs, his stairs, will each in their several relations be in unison with each other, with the spectators, with the domestic, the family, or the public. He is a sanitary magistrate, a good butler, an experienced cook, a constructive engineer, and a smoke doctor. He ministers to the luxuries of a princess in her bath-room and her boudoir, and to the comforts of the shoe-black in the scullery. He is a magnate in the church, and a manager of a theatre. He is an excellent gardener, and generally a good lawyer. He is a slater, a carpenter, a mason, and a plumber. He rises early and goes to bed late. He can do without his dinner when at work, and he can banquet without forgetting he has to rise in the morning. His levee is like that of a prime minister, attended by representatives of all classes, and all seeking favours. He is hand and glove with the groom and the watchman; the hares and dogs look to him for comfort; the lady's maid has her sly favours to solicit, from the hinge of a workbox to the key of the strong box, his services are called on as a banker: he is omnipotent; the sight of an architect creates a jubilee among the artisans of a country side; the whisky seller, the baker, and the butcher rejoice in his presence; he is prospective of comfort and work; he causes marriages, and, alas! sometimes deaths; he is the dispensing hand, which circulates among the industrious the wealth of the great. He is a man whom all honour and esteem, when the man who is in this relation to mankind *is a great artist*: without that grand qualification, the preceding character tumbles down like a pack of cards built up, as unsubstantial as his renown. He (Mr. Park) held, then, that great art was a necessity, and that a lofty standard of national morality and intelligence would by so much ennoble the aims of the artist: that a low class of mechanical art, based on mere trading principles, could never meet the upward sensibilities of mankind; and that its encouragement by the public was a direct proof of a compromise which should never exist between good and evil.

ON GOVERNING THE COURSE OF BALLOONS.

MORE than fifty years have passed since the ascent of the first balloon; but this beautiful invention, which seemed to promise so much for science, remains still little better than a mere toy, applicable to no useful purpose. Such it must ever remain until some means be discovered of propelling it *independently* of the wind, or of governing the direction of its course, *in spite of* the wind. It is now several years since a principle presented itself to my mind, by which, I believe these objects may be effected. And as I seek for no exclusive benefit from the suggestion, I proceed to lay it before the world, through your pages, that it may receive from practical men of science that measure of consideration to which it may be entitled; and, should it prove available, that the plan may be adopted for the public good, without restriction.

The principle I suggest is exceedingly simple. Let the propelling power be *the impact of a jet of elastic fluid* (such as steam or highly condensed air) *upon the atmosphere*. Let this jet be poured through a narrow tube, directed towards the point opposite to the balloon's intended course. When I consider the immense force with which a jet of steam

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